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ABSTRACT

This report focuses on service and service-learning in high schools. The report compares data from 1984 research with information from two studies of service and service-learning completed in 1997. The data suggest that community service and service-learning in 1984 was available in slightly more than one-quarter of all high schools (primarily to white students), and course-related programs (service-learning) occurred in only about 10% of all schools. The 1997 data indicate that the number of high school students involved in service-related programs has increased 686%; and the number of high school students involved in service-learning has increased 3,663%. Using data from studies of school-based and college and university-based service-learning programs, the report estimates the number of individuals participating in service-learning programs across the country. It also provides charts that show funding figures for service-learning programs. (BT)

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THE STATUS OF SERVICE-LEARNING IN THE UNITED STATES

SOME FACTS AND FIGURES

SO 031 547

by

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THE STATUS OF SERVICE-LEARNING

A Report on Service and Service-Learning in High Schools Between 1984 and 1997

People all over America are asking: how many youth are involved in community service and service-learning? More and more schools and school districts are requiring some form of service. Just how much has the service movement grown in the past 10-15 years? To answer this question, we will compare data from 1984 research with information from two studies of service and service-learning completed in 1997. Although there is also evidence that service and service-learning has grown in elementary schools and post-secondary institutions, the focus of this brief report is on service and service-learning in high schools.

What was the status of service and service-learning in 1984? From a study of 204 sampled high schools, Newmann and Rutter (1985) reported that:

- 27% of high schools offered some type of community service
- 900,000 high school students were enrolled in community service programs
- 81,000 students were doing service integrated into the curriculum (service-learning); approximately 9% of schools and programs offered service-learning
- 13% of all districts required service for graduation
- 60% of all participants were female and 40% were male
- 82% of all participants were White, 16% were African American, and 2% were Other.
- Private schools offered much higher percentage of service opportunities than public schools
- 84% of students in graduation-required programs were in college-bound track
- Hours worked range from 0-20; 51% of students worked 2 or fewer hours
- Students in elective programs spent twice as much time in community service as students in other programs
- Programs that awarded academic credit (service-learning) declined from 1979 to 1984, from 14% to 9%.
- 7% of all 1984 secondary students enrolled in service programs; only 2% of all secondary students enrolled in curriculum related programs

These figures suggest that community service and service-learning in 1984 was available in slightly more than one-quarter of all high schools, was available primarily to white students, and course-related programs (service-learning) occurred in only about 10% of all schools. Most youth were involved in service activities 2 hours or less. Most interestingly, the trend in developing course-related service learning was declining.

What is different about community service and service-learning in high schools today? Data from two studies, one regional (Maloy and Wohlleb, 1997) and one national (US Department of Education, 1997) present an interesting and somewhat different perspective. Below are data from the studies, with the regional study identified with MW, and the national study designated with USDED. In some areas only one study is cited because there is not comparable data reported in the other.

- Number of districts offering community service: 96% (MW), with 84% offering credit, awards, and/or guidance (MW); 86% (USDED)
- Percentage of schools offering service-learning (curriculum connected service): 88% (MW); 56% (USDED)
- Percentage of schools/districts that have service requirement: 16% (MW); 18% (USDED).
- Percentage of participation in service by gender: 53% female, 45% male (USDED)
- Percentage of participation by ethnicity: 72% White; 14% African American, 10 % Hispanic, 2% Other (USDED)
- Percentage of participants by grade average: 80% get "A" and "B" grades; 21% get "C", "D", or "F" grade (USDED)
- Number of students, grades 6-12, involved in service initiatives: 12,605,740 (number of public middle school students—5,068,699; number of private middle school students—732,600; number of public high school students -- 6,181,797; number of private high school students -- 831,600)--(USDED)
- Number of students doing service integrated into curriculum (service-learning): 5,400, 237; (Public Middle School – 2,081,327; Private Middle School –351,648; Public High School – 2,568,094; Private High School 399,168) (USDED)
- Percentage of students who participate in service by hours of service for the year: 7% do 10 or fewer hours; 7% do 11-30, 7% do 31-80; 5% do 80 or more. A total of 26% do regular community service; 49% report doing some service during the year (USDED)
- Percentage of districts that offer high levels of integration of service into courses (service-learning): 21% (MW)
- Support structures in districts that offer high levels of integration: 75% received Learn and Serve grants; 67% offered mini-grants to teachers; 67% had teachers discuss service-learning in workgroups; 58% followed curriculum frameworks that encourage service-learning (MW).

Comparison between 1984 and 1997

What are the differences in service and service-learning in the past 13 years? Examination of the data presented above produces some interesting and significant findings. Some things have not changed, while others have changed significantly. Let's take a look!

Some things have remained the same (data are reported using 1984 figures first, then 1997 data second):

- The percentage of student involvement has remained relatively stable, although participation by white students has statistically declined because of the increase in participation by Hispanic youth: 82% White vs 72% White; 16% African American vs. 14% African American; 0% Hispanic vs. 10% Hispanic; 2% Other vs. 2% Other.
- The number of hours that students engage in service, for the majority of youth, has remained somewhat the same: 51% work 2 or fewer hours/week vs. 49% do some service each year
- The profile of service participants continues to include high proportions of high achieving students: Over 50% of students involved in service are in college preparatory track vs. 80% of students who participate in service get "A" and "B" grades.

But other things have really changed:

- The number of high school students involved in service related programs has increased dramatically: 900,000 students vs. 6,181,797 students, an increase of 686 percent
- The number of high school students involved in service-learning has increased even more dramatically: 81,000 students vs. 2,967,262 students, a 3663 percent increase

Conclusions

Comparison of data from 1984 and 1997 demonstrate that high school service and service-learning has seen some stability and some dramatic change. While the populations participating and the hours of service have remained somewhat constant, with small changes, the participation rates of students, especially high school students has exploded. The rates of increase are not small – -expansion by over 3600 percent is nothing less than astounding. This is especially notable, since the population of high school students, for example, has remained almost static (12,377,455 in 1984 and 12,615,913 in 1997). So the huge increase is not the result of a large increase in the population of students, it is a genuine increase in the number of students participating in programs. While some of the Newmann and Rutter figures are admittedly understated, the numbers reported in terms of the increase in service are significant.

In addition, the move from community service to service-learning has been supported by many entities. The opportunity to improve the quality of service-learning, as revealed in the University of Massachusetts study, has been connected with several support structures. The support structure identified most in supporting and expanding K-12 service-learning is Learn and Serve America grants from the Corporation for National Service, as well as mini-grants to teachers. Thus, the expansion in numbers has been

accompanied by an increase in support systems to help educators improve the practice of service and service-learning.

This brief study set out to answer the question: what is different about the role and place of service and service-learning in American high schools since 1984. The answer is clear: service and service-learning has gone from a small dot on the educational landscape to an important place in the educational system. Rather than declining in size, as reported in 1984, it is growing at an incredibly huge rate. Over 12 million secondary students engage in service activities, and almost 5.5 million are connecting their service to the curriculum through service-learning. Any program that expands 3600 percent in 15 years deserves to be noticed – and studied. We hope that the information outlined in this brief report will encourage others to track the growth and development of the service and service-learning movement so we can have a better understanding of the size and scope of this educational intervention.

STATUS OF SERVICE-LEARNING IN THE UNITED STATES

Based on studies of school-based and college and university-based service-learning programs, we estimate the following number of individuals are participating ir service-learning programs across the country. To the best of our knowledge:

SECONDARY SCHOOLS

- Participation rates in secondary schools are 53% female and 47% male
- The total number of students in secondary schools doing service and service-learning is over 12.5 million
- The number of middle school students doing service and service-learning is over 5 million
- The number of high school students doing service and service-learning is over 6 million
- The number of high school students doing service learning is almost 3 million
- The number of middle school students doing service-learning is almost 2.5 million
- The growth in number of students engaged in high school service-learning between 1984 and 1997 was 3663 percent!

COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

- There are more than 6.7 million students in public and private 4 year institutions of higher education
- Almost 30% report participating in a course where service is part of the curriculum (unpublished data from the HERI study at UCLA)
- Almost 2 million students participate in service-learning at 4 year public and private institutions
- Over 1.5 million students participate in service-learning at private 4 year institutions
- Over 350,000 participate in service-learning at public 4 year institutions
- Over 800,000 students involved in service-learning participate in schools that are members of Campus Compact
- At Campus Compact member 2 year institutions, almost 130,000 students participate in service-learning
- Almost half of all community colleges in the U.S. offer service-learning courses

WHERE IN THE WORLD IS SERVICE-LEARNING?

Previous information indicates that service-learning has grown tremendously in the last 15 years. School-based programs have proliferated by almost 3700 percent, and almost six million secondary students participate in service-learning programs. Clearly an acceleration of growth appears to have taken place after the enactment of federal legislation support national and community service. The Corporation for National Service (CNS) is the largest single funder of initiatives in elementary, secondary, and post-secondary institutions promoting service-learning.

While it is understood that service-learning is growing, where does it stand in relationship to other national initiatives affecting youth, especially school aged youth? Some claim service-learning is a fad that is relatively small in numbers and big in hype. It will fade in a short period of time.

The numbers presented in this section reveal another picture -- service-learning is not a fad, it is a movement that has participation rates as large as any major youth initiative in the country. When you compare the involvement of youth in service-learning with other national programs, service-learning emerges as a national player with only one notable exception -- its funding level is far lower than any of the other comparable systems. Let's take a look!

The Charts

The major information presented here is done in chart form. This brief narrative is provided to supplement the information and to place the data in perspective.

Chart I indicates the number of youth participating in national programs. Service-learning participation exceeds all of the major youth and school-based initiatives, except National 4-H. However, these numbers are deceptive. While six million youth participate in 4-H, four million of those are at the K-6 level; so only two million participate at secondary age levels. This places 4-H far below the service-learning levels.

The same holds true for Girl and Boy Scouts. Their participation falls off dramatically at middle and high school age levels.

While clearly there is some overlap with these numbers, with scouts and youth clubs participating in service-learning activities, the trend indicates there is much interest in service–learning, in general. The fact is that *service-learning is actually increasing* in participation at the secondary level, precisely when other youth initiatives experience declines, suggests that service-learning is meeting a strong need for youth to engage their communities in meaningful ways.

In Chart II we examine the funding levels of the major initiatives. These numbers represent the funding source for only the national level initiatives – with the Corporation for National Service being the largest

single funded entity for service-learning in the country. These figures represent only approximations of actual costs associated with each program, for surely each initiative has other related costs, such as teacher supervisors, adult volunteers, and locally raised expenses for food, transportation, etc. To actually estimate those real expenditures would become a horrendous task.

Using the national figures, service-learning funding is the lowest of all major programs. Girl Scouts, which serves fewer than half those involved in service-learning, is funded at levels 50% higher. 4-H, which serves slightly more participants, is funded at levels more than 20 times greater than service-learning.

In Chart III we find expenses per participant. These figures were compiled by dividing the cost of the program by the number of participants involved. There is quite a range, from school-based vocational programs costing up to $200 per participant, to service-learning, which costs under $6 per pupil.

The final chart, Chart IV, summarizes the information contained in the other three charts. It provides specific data on each category: number of participants, funding level, and cost per-participant. It shows that service-learning is, indeed, one of the lowest cost programs serving a population of youth as large as any of the national initiatives.

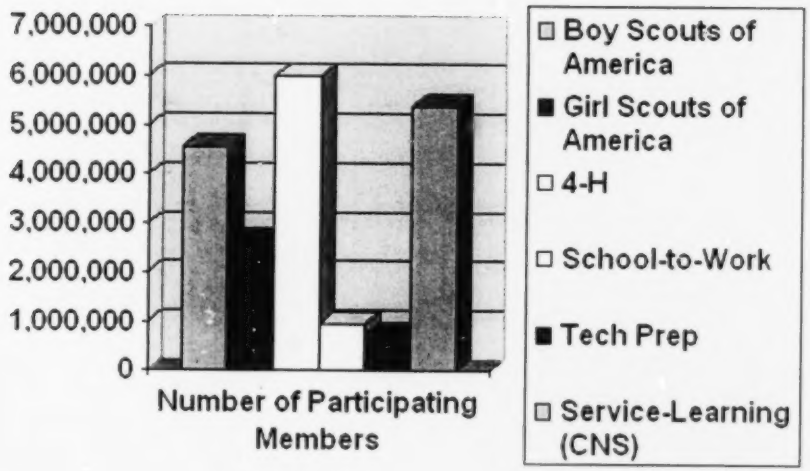

Chart I - Number of Participating Members

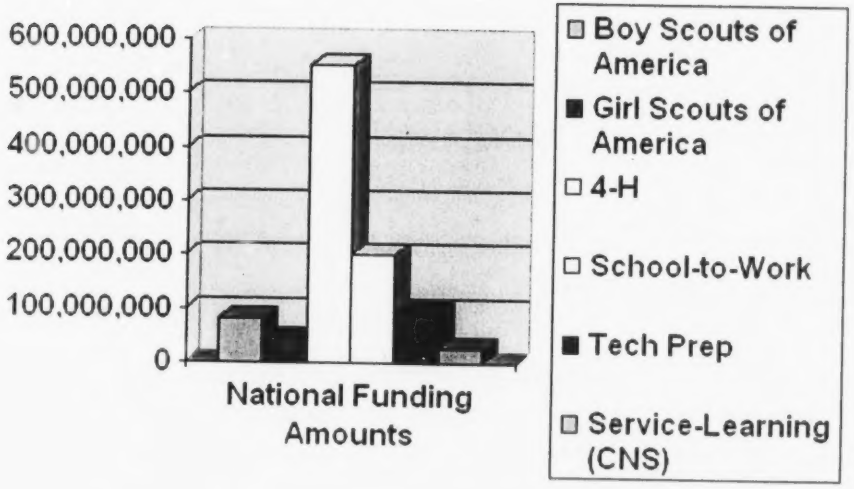

Chart II - National Funding Amounts

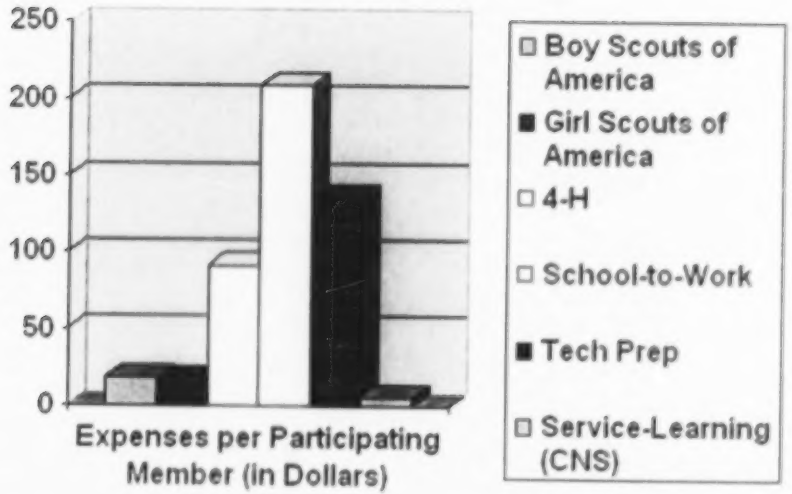

Chart III - Expenses per Participating Member

Chart IV

Organization	Number of Participants	funding	Funding per Participant
Boy Scouts of America	4573000	$ 84,000,000.00	$ 18.37
Girl Scouts of America	2670692	$ 44,000,000.00	$ 16.48
4-H	6009997	$ 550,000,000.00	$ 91.51
School-to-Work	958794	$ 200,000,000.00	$ 208.60
Tech Prep	737635	$ 100,000,000.00	$ 135.57
Service-Learning (CNS)	5400237	$ 30,000,000.00	$ 5.56

Information provided by:
The National Council of the Boys Scouts of America

The National Council of the Girls Scouts

The 4H National Headquarters

Office of Adult and Vocational Education (Department of Education)

Learn and Serve America Final Report (Alan Melchior/Brandeis University)